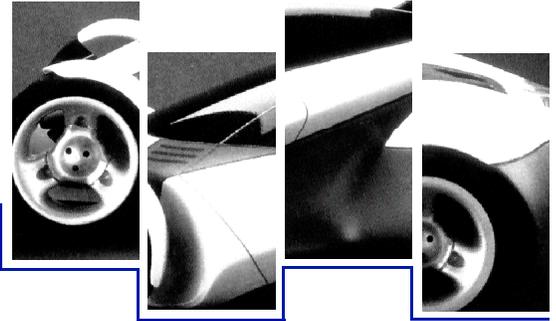


USA FACTS

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SPORT UTILITY VEHICLES: TRAFFIC SAFETY TIPS

Vehicles popularly called utility vehicles or *sport* utility vehicles have many qualities of passenger cars, but they also have special features for off-road operation. Because of this unique combination of features, they must be driven differently than vehicles designed only for on-road operation.

What is a Sport Utility Vehicle?

Vehicles that are designed to operate on- and off-paved roads are utility vehicles. If the utility vehicle weighs 8,500 pounds or less, it is called a *sport* utility vehicle.

Driving Characteristics

Most utility vehicles are equipped with 4-wheel drive and can be driven in conditions in which passenger cars have difficulty operating--on snow or ice, in mud or sand, or up steep hills that require extra traction. They typically have higher ground clearance than passenger cars, and some have a shorter wheel-base or narrower tire track width. These features enable them to pass through narrow clearances, travel over rugged terrain, and cross shallow streams. However,

these same features give them a higher center of gravity, making them more top-heavy than cars. This characteristic causes utility vehicles to handle and maneuver differently. They are not designed for cornering at the same (top) speeds as passenger cars.

Risk of Rollover

More rollover fatalities occur with small cars, but utility vehicles have a rollover rate that is 2 to 3 times that of passenger cars. Rollover crashes typically involve dangerous driver behavior. Lower seat belt use, speeding, and alcohol use are common factors in more than 90 percent of all rollover fatalities. Many drivers do not understand that utility vehicles handle differently than passenger cars. If you make sharp turns or abrupt maneuvers in a

INSIDE

■ Traffic Safety Tips

■ Auto Safety Hotline



U.S. Department
of Transportation

National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

THE LABEL ON THE DASHBOARD

Manufacturers are required to place an advisory sticker in each utility vehicle near the driver that reads:

“This is a multipurpose passenger vehicle which will handle and maneuver differently from an ordinary passenger car, in driving conditions which may occur on streets and highways and off road. As with other vehicles of this type, if you make sharp turns or abrupt maneuvers, the vehicle may roll over or may go out of control and crash. You should read driving guidelines and instructions in the Owner's Manual, and **wear your seat belt at all times.**”

utility vehicle, it may roll over or go out of control and crash.

Occupant Protection

Because of the greater risk of rollover in a utility vehicle, it is important to wear safety belts (a good idea anytime) to keep from being ejected. Ejection occurs more frequently in rollover crashes and also with open

(bodied) vehicles. Features such as rollbars, rollcages, and harness belt systems also provide additional crash protection both on- and off-road.

Consult the Owner's Manual

The owner's manual explains the special driving precautions that should be taken. Take the time to

read and point out these precautions to others who may operate your vehicle.

Enjoy Your Vehicle

Enjoy the benefits of your vehicle's capability to drive on- and off-road. But be careful when driving off-road because driving under such conditions is by its very nature more risky. ■

IF YOU THINK YOUR MOTOR VEHICLE HAS A SAFETY PROBLEM, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE (800) 424-9393

If you think that your vehicle has a safety problem, you can assist the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) by completing and mailing back the Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire (VOQ) included with this fact sheet, or calling the Auto Safety Hotline.

The toll-free Hotline number, (800) 424-9393, can be reached from anywhere in the United States. If you are calling from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, the number is (202) 366-0123. A Spanish-speaking operator is available weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Eastern time. The Hotline is available to the hearing impaired through a teleprinter (TTY) number, (800) 424-9153. In the Washington, D.C. area the TTY number is (202) 366-7800.



If it is determined that a safety defect exists, the manufacturer has to fix the problem at no cost to the owner.

If there are any documents relevant to your case, including copies of repair bills and letters to the manufacturer, attach them to your completed VOQ.

If you are not sure of any information requested in the VOQ, leave the box blank. But we must have the Vehicle Identification

Number (VIN) to process your questionnaire. The VIN is a 17-digit number that can be seen through the front windshield on the driver's side of the dashboard. When reporting a tire problem, the DOT identification (located on the sidewall) is needed.

The VOQ asks if you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of your report to the manufacturer. If so, check YES on the VOQ and sign and date it. When we send the report to the manufacturer, it often results in a satisfactory solution of individual problems. But NHTSA cannot order corrective action unless the vehicle or item of equipment is determined to have a defect and a safety recall campaign is conducted.

